BEMUSING MAGAZINE

1

# SPECIAL

NOVEMBER 17th

2P

C.C. BECK TO STAY ON SHAZAM

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BIG SHAKE-UP AT MARVEL

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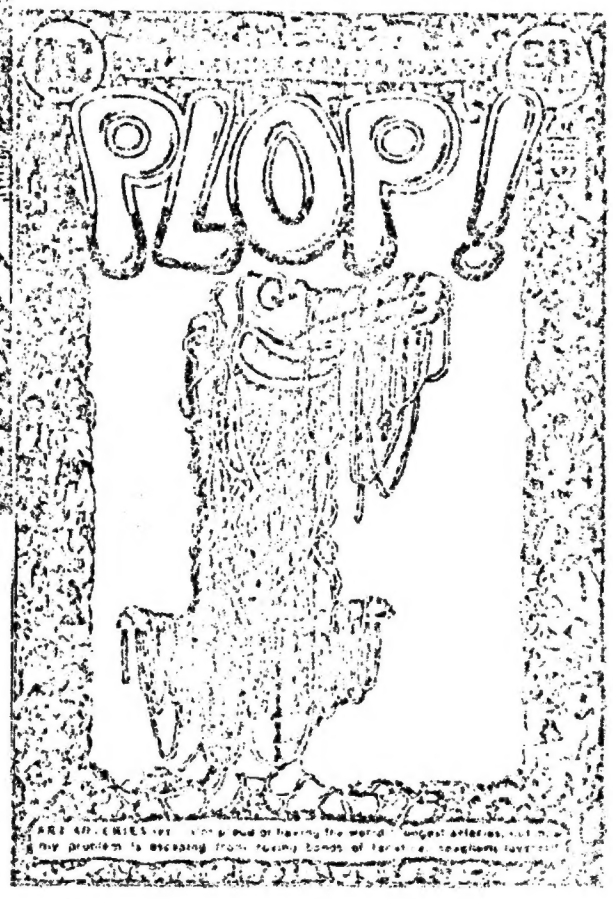
PRICES SHOCK

THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS, FOR THIS SPECIAL SATURDAY... INCLUDING A GUIDE TO PRICING AND A FULL "TALE-ENDERS" SECTION INSIDE....



## LEADING ARTICLE: "BURNT ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY?"

Recently, comics have been receiving an unusually large ammount of attention. Today we have the cameras of the BBC's "Edition" programme with us; I'm sure that this late-night BBC-2 magazine means to treat us fairly, and I hope that we all co-operate with the employees of the youngest communications medium in their ceaseless quest for truth and good television.

However, attention from some other quarters has been more arbitrary, and less welcome. The Customs have now developed the habit of scrutinising Nick Landau's new imports with a ludicrous mixture of moral indignation and ignorance, so that not only the black & white magazines, but also the Code-approved titles risk being seized and destroyed, solely because some bureaucrat with "komix are for tiny kids" smeared on his soul has the opportunity to play censor. This attitude, that the graphic story is fit only for tinies who could not read a page of solid text, is, regrettably, still part of many people's mental furniture - strange, when so many people just do not read anything more complicated than "End of Part One", that the static blend of words and pictures we "panelologists" know and love is still low man on the media pole behind its younger brothers, TV and Film, which spoon-feed their viewers with the same ingredients less imaginatively handled.

Some people like to trace comics back to cave drawings, or at least the tombs of the Pharoahs, which makes the art of the pictorial narrative the original art form, and ordinary painting, sculpture, and their analogous crafts mere "spin-offs" of the graphic art; it's a nice

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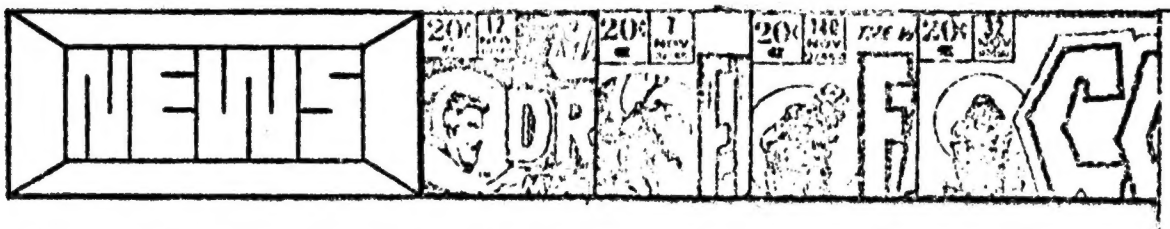
BEMUSING MAGAZINE is published by the editor, Martin Lock.
Issue 1; second issue will (I hope) be on sale at the next Comic Mart, on January 19th, with perhaps photo-reduction, to allow decent-sized margins. This is a non-profit-making magazine; we did not plan it that way, it just sort of happened... (c) 1973 by M. Lock




Have C.C. Beck and National (D.C.) parted company? Beck's own statement on this, issued at the Cleveland Comic Art con, is reproduced on the right, but is, according to a fan who corresponds with Beck, not the final word on the subject. In fact, National seems to have backed down, and in future C.C. Beck will do both script and art for Captain Marvel; however, Bob Oksner, Dave Cockrum, and Kurt Schaffenberger have all completed stories for Julie Schwartz to use in upcoming issues of SHAZAM.

**Dear friends of Captain Marvel everywhere:**

When National asked me to help bring back Captain Marvel I was very happy to start drawing the World's Mightiest Mortal again after twenty years. The first few issues of Shazam, containing stories based on Golden Age characters, were a joy to illustrate and I'm sure that readers both young and old were glad to see matchless Captain Marvel in action once more.

After the first few issues, however, the stories seemed to be to be changing both Captain Marvel's character and the way he went into action. In the old stories strange and wonderful things happened to Billy Batson and to Captain Marvel. In National's new stories Captain Marvel was beginning to fly around and do silly things seemingly just to show off. Nothing very interesting was happening to him at all and both he and Billy seemed to be gradually turning into a pair of imbeciles.

I complained to National and finally, in July of this year, I returned two scripts which seemed to me to be completely unsuitable for the World's Mightiest Mortal. I have never received another script to illustrate since.

What will happen to Captain Marvel now is anybody's guess. I'm not too optimistic, are you?

Sincerely,
C.C. Beck

Stan Lee has been taking a long hard look at Marvel's colour comics, and, apparently, he does not like what he sees. As a result of this, there are going to be quite drastic changes, with many a familiar name vanishing from the credit boxes. Smilin' Stan reportedly spent a half-hour ripping apart one of Gary Friedrich's latest scripts, but nothing is certain yet.

Get ready for a price increase in a month or so for the regular comics; instead of 6p, both Marvel and DC will soon be charging EIGHT. This is to tie in with a rise in America from 20 to 25 cents.

The forthcoming death of one of Marvel's most fascinating super-heroes is announced. The place of execution will be Hulk's comic; the hero, the messianic Warlock.

The November issue of Marvel's "Supernatural Thrillers" will be the last to contain full-length adaptations of novels or legends; those in preparation will be used in the black & white magazines. After a gap of a number of months, the title will return, featuring a new series called "The Victims of Dracula".

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It seems that Lancer's series of Conan novels and short story collections may remain incomplete, as Curtis, who owned Lancer Books, are now defunct. The twelfth and final Conan book (11th in chronological sequence), "Conan of Aquilonia", containing four stories by Lin Carter & L. Sprague de Camp, had been set for September release; it had a reportedly fantastic Frank Frazetta cover. Even if some copies have been printed, legal formalities will keep them out of circulation for years.

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LEADING ARTICLE - continued from page 2

thought, and probably as true as any other theory this side of Lord Clark. Editorial cartoons have a history almost as long and rich as newspapers; Punch and Judy starred in their own mass-produced comic book back in the 17th century. So what went wrong? Apparently, it was the Victorian notion that anything of value had to present a high literary obstacle to be overcome that first put the graphic art into disrepute. Also, when comic books as we know them started again in the 1930s in America, the marketeers made them into the "kid brothers" of that fecund field of fast-action fiction, the adventure pulps. To this day, almost any comic magazine has to remember that a good proportion of the fare-paying customers is still in short trousers, even if the responding reader, the fan, can be any age this side of 173, still getting real enjoyment from the collecting and reading of our four-coloured friends, the comics.

So; some books may be hokum, or they may be the only cheap, mass-produced works of art in the classical tradition about. They may be gaudy - or they may be the best literature to have a mass audience (a sale of 200,000 copies per monthly issue is not unusual, after all) since Caxton. But, whether you collect Conan or Action Comics, Russ Manning or Winsor McCay, keep in mind - you are doing what <u>you</u> want to do.

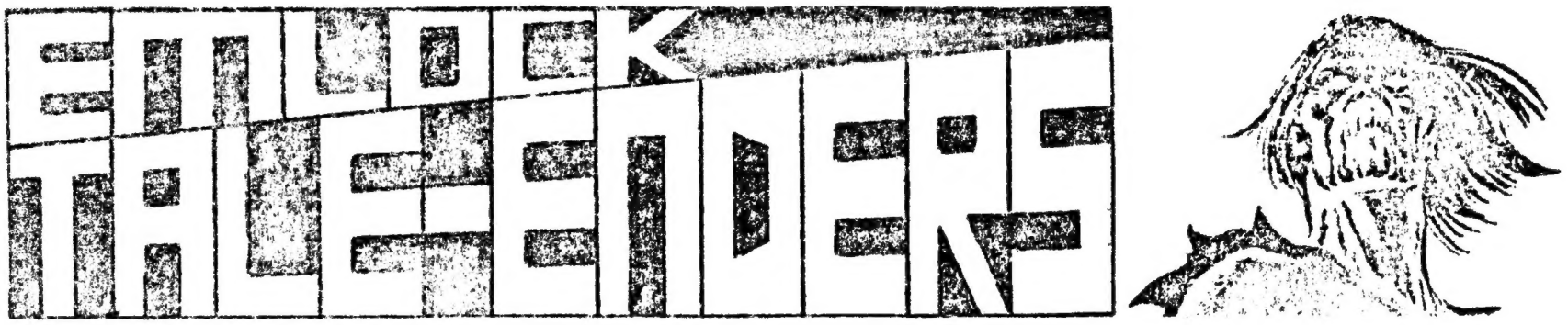
*Martin Lock*

# REVIEWS

SAVAGE TALES featuring Conan the Barbarian.....Issue 3

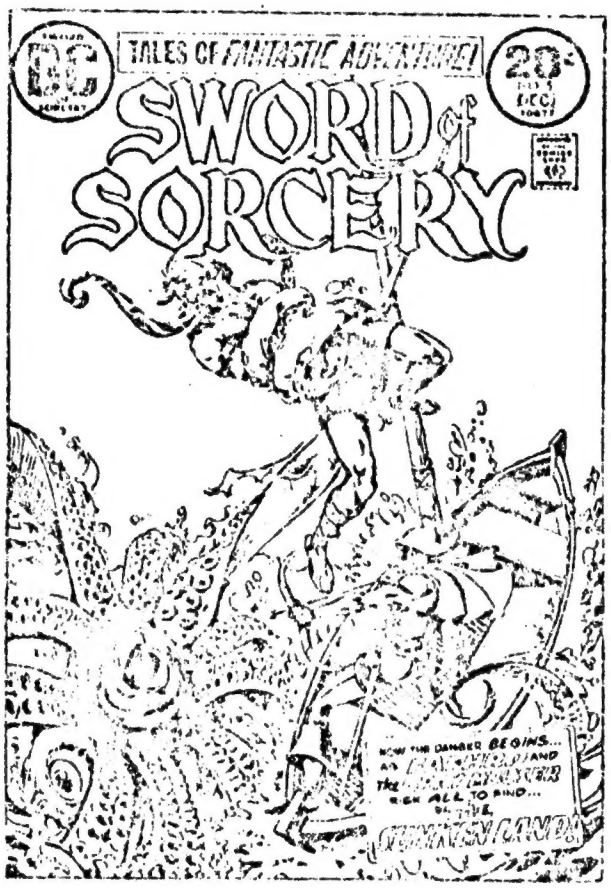
Containing "The Lurker in the Catacombs" and "He Comes From the Dark" by Roy Thomas, writer, & Barry Smith, artist, being the second half of their adaptation of "Red Nails" by Robert E Howard, plus two pages of "Red Sonja" by Esteban Maroto, and, reprinted from issue 1, Stan Lee & John Romita's "The Fury of the Femizons", with an illustrated article on his creation "Talon" by Jim Steranko, a text story by Ray Capella starring his Hyborian-age hero Arquel of Argos, "The Crimson Bell", illustrated by Frank Brunner and Al Williamson, plus a very frank editorial by Roy Thomas, features on both Thomas and Smith, an article on the old Conan art in Weird Tales, and one or two extra pages of Barry Smith artwork...

The question we must ask ourselves is, is this the best comic book yet published? With a 37-page Conan/Thomas/Smith epic plus small but excellent helpings of Brunner, Maroto, Steranko, and Williamson, the answer could well be yes. Robert E. Howard called "Red Nails" "the grimmest, bloodiest, and most merciless story of the series so far", and the invincible team of Thomas & Smith have kept true to his vision, so that the page is often speckled with blood. The art is perhaps a little looser than Smith's very best work in the past, as he had a lot of work to do before his deadline, but there's plenty of it, and the cumulative effect is very fine. The editorial must put a damper on our celebrations, though, as once again Savage Tales is discontinued, pending the sales figures for issues 2 & 3. However, these issues we <u>do</u> have; get them.




The SHAZAM 100-pager (Dec) contains 8 stories from the forties, with ALL the Marvel family in action, including the 3 Lieutenant Marvels. Despite the 12 pages of ads, it's the best value in super-specs yet...SPECIAL MARVEL EDITION 15 is the first issue of "Master of Kung Fu", with Shang-Chi, son of Fu Manchu, as star, and Jim Starlin as artist; a very promising new series... EERIE 52 (Nov) has one of the last stories Maroto did for Jim Warren, plus a story by Britain's own Paul Neary which is the best thing in the issue...SUPERGIRL 8 (Nov) is another bad book-length banality, this time involving a silly Medusa curse and, for just long enough to justify the cover, Hawkman, Green Lantern, & Batman...In MARVEL PREMIERE 12 (Nov), Frank Brunner proves that he is the best artist Marvel has working on a regular feature; Dr Strange has never been better...With no.57 (Nov) CREEPY loses 16 pages and 25 cents as Warren begins to feel the competition from the Marvel black & whites. The colour story is again by Rich Corben, and again pretty good... PLOP 2 (Dec) has fine weird stories drawn by Alcala, Cardy, and Aragones, plus so-so cartoons and a suitably ghastly cover by Basil Wolverton...We've had too many last issues from Marvel recently, and no.8 of DOC SAVAGE (Jan) is another, barring miracles; it has the best art of the series, too - Palmer on Buckler's breakdowns...SUPERBOY 199 has a 13-page LEGION story, plus a 7-page back-up on - not the young Clark Kent, but Legionnaire Bouncing Boy. All art by Dave Cockrum... DRACULA LIVES 4 (Jan) contains a lead story drawn by Mike Ploog, but is otherwise a time-passer...Kubert's version of "TARZAN of the Apes" was cut by a total of 28½ pages to fit into the One Dollar large-size book, mainly by removing splash pages and minor incidents; it has a new splash panel, though, and art revisions on at least two frames...WORLDS UNKNOWN 5 (Jan) features A.E. van Vogt's classic SF story "Black Destroyer" - Coeurl,

however, is not portrayed very well...The final issue of SWORD OF SORCERY (5,Dec) has Walt Simonson, one of the best new artists for a long time, handling the lead story, while the back-up feature on the young Gray Mouser is scripted by George Effinger and pencilled by Jim Starlin... TALES OF THE ZOMBIE 3 (Jan) contains quite a nice 6-page story drawn by Vincente Alcazar, dealing with a Samurai and a most unusual dragon; also included in the book is a 22-page yarn about Simon Garth, Zombie, with art by Pablo Marcos - rather good...



FLASH 224 (Dec) contains another excellent 8-page Green Lantern story by the team of Denny O'Neil, writer, and Dick Giordano, artist; the Flash story isn't bad either ...MARVEL TEAM-UP 16 (Dec) has Spidey joined with Capt. Marvel against baddie "Basilisk" - art by Gil Kane. -ML

The next instalment of "Tale-Enders" is scheduled to appear in COMIC MEDIA NEWS No.10, the first anniversary issue, on sale in approximately one month, available in all good comicshops or by post from its editor, Richard Burton; a 4 issue subscription costs 55p.

Other fanzines to recommend are FANTASY UNLIMITED (issue 16, a BATMAN special, is still available from Alan Austin at a bargain 10p), COMIC MEDIA (issue 10, featuring The Seekers, Modesty Blaise, and Eisner's SPIRIT, is on sale today at 20p from Nick Landau), and the long-awaited fiftieth issue of FANTASY ADVERTISER from Dez Skinn. Comic Media News (-letter) 9 can still be bought from its editor at 12p.

## EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT COMIC PRICING

(but somehow forgot to ask)

How much are comics worth? There is no easy answer; in the last analysis, most of them are worth what you are willing to pay, no less and no more. All that I can suggest here is a price range I would consider to be reasonable for mint copies of various types as a very minor dealer (five days a year), a fan, and, most importantly, a collector:-

1. Recent ordinary Marvels & DCs.....8-12pence
2. 1963-1971 ordinary DC issues.....8-20p
3. Current special imports - DC.....10-15p
4. 64 & 80 page DC magazines.....10-40p
5. 1967-1971 ordinary Marvel issues.....12-30p
6. 1972&1973 special titles (e.g. Conan)..15-20p
7. 1963-1971 DCs: Special Artists.....15-40p
8. Current special imports - Marvel.....20p
9. 1961-1962 DCs.....20-40p
10. 1961-1966 Marvels.....20-100p
11. Back issues Marvel special imports.....25-50p
12. Poorly distributed DC first issues.....40-75p
13. DC comics of the fifties.....40-200p
14. Current Warren & Marvel black & whites.75-100p
15. First issues Marvel black & whites.....£1·00-£1·50
16. Marvel first super-hero issues.....£1·00-£10·00

This list does not cover every category, of course; in particular, I omit Golden Age magazines, and EC comics. For a guide to pricing on these, I can only refer you to the comprehensive American publications such as "The Comic Book Price Guide" by Robert M. Overstreet. The price ranges I do give are in some cases rather wide, mainly because some titles are more sought-after than others; also, work of artists such as Adams, Everett, Wrightson, Frazetta, Williamson, Barry Smith, Brunner, Maroto, Wood, and Kirby is more desirable than that of some industrious hack.

I hope that this small article will be of help, in at least making people more aware that prices are what the buyers, as well as dealers, make them. So, please shop around and compare prices today; it helps everyone.

STRANGE SPORTS STORIES No.2 (December) (DC)
"Karate on the Moon" by O'Neil/Novick & Giordano (9pp)
"Volley of Death" by Frank Robbins/Dick Giordano (4pp)
"Tall in the Saddle" by Robbins/Swan & Anderson (7pp)

A good issue, this, fulfilling the promise of the old try-out Brave & Bold issues. Denny O'Neil's lead yarn is the poorest of the three, being a half-hearted mish-mash of any number of plot clichés that answers none of the questions it raises, but Robbins delivers the goods in both his stories, a tennis-based SF short and a tale of a believable gipsy-cum-witch who, quite by accident, turns a race-horse into a dinosaur and a horse-race to a glorious shambles. The "Swanderson" art on this is up to their usual standard of excellence - but I did keep expecting Clark Kent and friend to arrive...

ASTONISHING TALES featuring IT! No.21 (Dec) (Marvel)
"The Colossus Lives Again" by Isabella/Ayers (15pp)
"The Man Who Captured Death" by Lee/Ditko(5pp reprint)

The Stan Lee and Steve Ditko reprint here is a little better than most of the reprints Marvel has been giving us recently. An old scientist traps Death in a prison he has made, and - no-one, and nothing, dies; insects, rats, even germs multiply unchecked. Horrified, the man frees Death. "I am ready now" - "Then come to me, mortal... I shall bring you - peace! As I have brought so many others before you - thus has it ever been... thus must it ever be..." Oh, yes, the lead story, start of Marvel's all-new monster series, stinks. Who says this isn't the Emlock age of constructive reviewing?

E-MAN No.1 (October) (Charlton)
"The Brain and the Bomb" by Nicola Cuti/Staton (16pp)
"THE KNIGHT: Operation Rotten Apple" Cuti/Sutton(8pp)

How pleasant to welcome Charlton back to the super-hero field! And with such a nice concept,too; the heat of a distant nova creates a disembodied intelligence, a being of pure energy. After an eon or so, it encounters a spaceship directed by an evil brain out to destroy - not Earth, but Pluto! Anyway, as energy and

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matter are interchangeable, the energy-creature is able to change into the form of one of the brain's robot servants. This alters the mass of the ship, so that it crashes on Earth; the energy-being escapes unharmed, to end up trapped in a light-bulb. Our heroine, Nova Kane (you look at her, and you feel no pain, believe me) frees him by smashing the bulb at his ventriloquial request; after a moment, he takes human form, so as not to startle her.

In the morning (he modestly sleeps in her car that night - in the battery, to be exact) during breakfast, he encounters "$E=mc^2$" - and then Nova's landlord tries to kill them, to be thwarted by a blast of energy from our hero's hand. What made the poor chap run amuck? Apparently, he had been vacationing near where the ship from space crashed, so the duo dash off there, Nova by jeep and her new friend by telephone. Miss Kane finds the locals unfriendly; as a cat, our hero manages to avoid the mob. Later, they rendezvous at a motel, and E-Man shows off his snazzy new yellow-and-orange super-hero costume, with Einstein's equation as his chest insignia. Nova comments, "You act like a man trying to impress his girl" - and E-Man quickly changes the subject. They go out to the crashed spaceship, to find the brain loose, and the planet-destroying weapon near the end of its count-down. After a contest of energy, the brain is destroyed, and the bomb made harmless. "E-Man! Let's go home. Did you bring any money with you?" - "Uh... What's money?"

A nice, tongue-in-cheek story, and Joe Staton's art does it justice; in fact, it's the best interior Staton art I've seen. The second story, a routine "The Man from C.H.E.S.S." spy yarn, is principally notable for the ways Tom Sutton's art resembles Ditko's and even Boyette's. Anyway, E-Man is great fun, and well worth six of anyone's pennies - and it should be in every newsagent's shop now.

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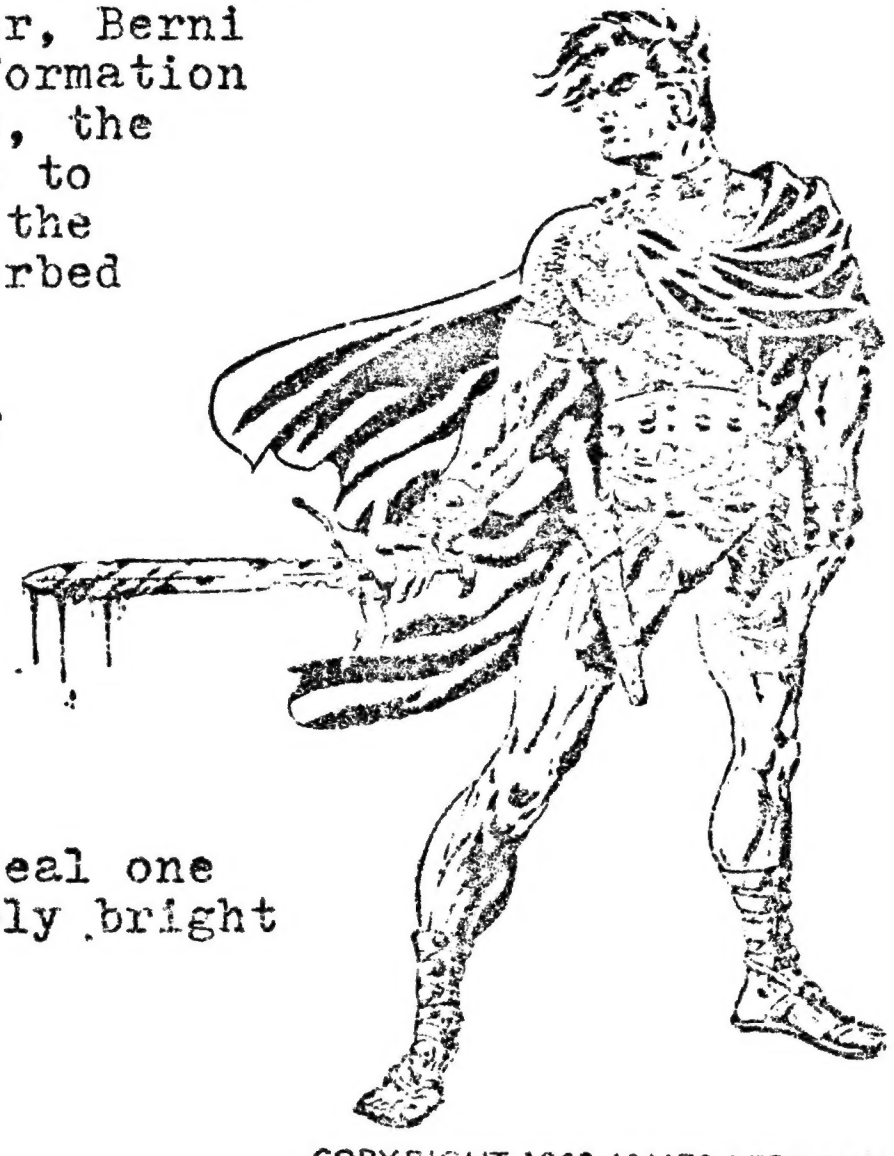
And, except for the back cover, that's all for now, fellow fans; I hope you feel that your two pence were well invested. My thanks for their encouragement go especially to Alan Austin, Frank Dobson, & R. Burton.

REVIEW - Limited $1·00 Collectors' Edition C-23, winter
THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY contents:-
"The House of Gargoyles"(Haney/Sparling); "The Secret of the Egyptian Cat"(Kanigher/Wrightson); "The Widow's Walk"(Howie Post/Adams & Orlando); "His Name is... ~~Cain~~ Kane!"(Mike Friedrich/Kane & Wood); "The Devil's Doorway"(Oleck/Toth); "The Poster Plague"(Skeates/Sergio Aragones); and "Nightmare"(Oleck/Adams), plus "Game Rooms" and "Page Thirteens" by Aragones, a feature page on the House's notable residents, an Aragones diorama, and a two-page pin-up of Cain by Berni Wrightson.

This special Halloween Collectors' Edition has got some of the best stories House of Mystery ever published, before the in some ways equally talented foreign crew of artists moved in. Take another look at the contents I list; Wrightson, Adams, Gil Kane inked by Wally Wood, and more. What more could a mystery buff want, with these stories, now four or five years old and difficult to find in the original comics, presented in all their colourful splendour and almost double-size?

There are plenty of memorable moments here; the stone gargoyles that come to life to revenge their designer's murder, Berni Wrightson's double-page transformation of cat into Egyptian priestess, the captain who is finally allowed to bring his dead ship back into the harbour, how Gil Kane got absorbed (literally) in his work, the mirror that became a gate to hell, the hilariously sinister secret of Klop, fore-runner of Plop, and the dark side of a young child's dreams, beautifully counter-balanced by the heroic young Pan-statue. All the stories benefit from the larger format of this book, so that this magazine is an ideal one to use to convert any reasonably bright non-fan.



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